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Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of fourteen members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 26 October 2016 from the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations presents its compliments to the President of the General Assembly and has the honour to transmit herewith the pledges and commitments of the Government of the United Kingdom with reference to the United Kingdom's candidature for re-election to the Human Rights Council for the period 2017-2019, at the election to be held on 28 October 2016, during the seventy-first session of the General Assembly (see annex).

The Permanent Mission would be grateful if the present note and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 114 (d).

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Please recycle

Annex to the note verbale dated 26 October 2016 from the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Candidature of the United Kingdom to the Human Rights Council, 2017-2019

Voluntary pledges and commitments pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/251

The United Kingdom pledges to:

A. Strengthen the role of human rights in the work of the United Nations

Encouraging a fast international response to severe human rights violations and abuses, including in support of conflict prevention

1. We will address human rights situations and crises, either through support and dialogue or greater scrutiny. We will increase our focus on those countries where universal rights are at greatest risk and we will encourage, not penalize, early engagement with the Human Rights Council. We will work to support the successful mainstreaming of human rights across the United Nations system.

Helping states through transition by supporting stability and reform efforts on the ground

2. We will work with states in transition to encourage the systematic implementation of reforms and to provide international support. We will encourage the full use of tools at the disposal of the Human Rights Council, including, for example, visits of the Special Rapporteurs, universal periodic reviews and capacity-building.

Supporting a strong and independent United Nations human rights system

3. We will work to ensure that the Human Rights Council remains at the forefront of the work of the United Nations on human rights. We will support the independence and the work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and his Office. We will work in a spirit of openness, consultation and respect for all, on a foundation of cooperation across regional groups. We will encourage dialogue with parliaments and civil society. We will promote the vital role of the independent United Nations human rights treaty body monitoring system in the protection of human rights globally. We will encourage the ratification of United Nations human rights instruments and their successful implementation by governments. We will maintain a standing invitation to and cooperation with the Special Rapporteurs who wish to visit and will encourage other countries to do the same. We remain committed to the success of the universal periodic review process and pledge to assist others by sharing our experiences and offering advice and support.

B. Translate the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into action that leaves no one behind

Helping women and girls to achieve a voice, choice and control in development (Sustainable Development Goal 5)

4. We will help to remove the barriers stopping women in the world's poorest countries from getting jobs. This includes tackling discriminatory laws, all forms of violence in the public and private spheres and poor infrastructure. We will support work in education by helping 6.5 million more girls to go to school over the next five years and support efforts, led by affected communities, to end female genital mutilation and child, early and forced marriage within a generation.

Tackling the scourge of modern slavery across borders (target 8.7)

5. We are implementing the Modern Slavery Act 2015, which ensures that major businesses operating in the United Kingdom must report on how they tackle modern slavery in their global supply chains. We support anti-trafficking projects globally, including working in partnership with the International Labour Organization on the "Work in freedom" programme. In addition, the Government of the United Kingdom and the United Kingdom Independent Anti-slavery Commissioner work with Governments, national and international law enforcement agencies, civil society and other stakeholders to end modern slavery.

Supporting work on justice, the rule of law and open societies (Sustainable Development Goal 16)

6. We will continue to support peace and security across the globe, including through the work of the Human Rights Council. We are working to improve access to security and justice services for 10 million women and girls. We will support efforts to improve governance and tackle corruption and bribery through the work of the Open Government Partnership, the United Nations and a global anti-corruption summit, to be led by the former Prime Minister, David Cameron, in London.

C. Stand up for freedom of religion or belief

Defending the freedom of people of all religions and beliefs to live without discrimination and violence

7. We will continue to challenge discriminatory legislation and practices. We will encourage full use of the Human Rights Council's universal periodic review process, special procedures and treaty body mechanisms to raise cases in which the freedom of religion or belief is violated. We will play an active role in the International Contact Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief and support the International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief.

Supporting persecuted minorities in the Middle East

8. We will continue to work with civil society to develop strategies to assist Christians and people belonging to other minorities. We will work with regional

allies to address the climate of impunity and legal discrimination that persists against minorities in the region.

Advocating in favour of equality and non-discrimination, including on the grounds that freedom of religion or belief can help to counter violent extremism

9. We will promote a whole-of-society approach to extremism, including by working with religious leaders, teachers and civil society groups to encourage them to play an active role in tackling extremism in their communities.

D. Work to end violence against women and girls to promote women's full participation and leadership in political and economic life

Tackling violence against women and girls, including sexual violence in conflict, all forms of domestic violence and harmful practices, including during humanitarian crises

10. We will drive forward the preventing sexual violence in conflict initiative and champion the road map to take forward the Call to Action to Protect Women and Girls in Emergencies. We will promote widespread implementation of the international protocol on the documentation and investigation of sexual violence in conflict and encourage greater support, assistance and reparation for survivors of all forms of violence against women and girls. We will advocate the full integration of responses to sexual and gender-based violence and the promotion of gender equality and women's participation into all peace and security efforts. We will work with other governments to improve international strategic coordination.

Promoting women's economic empowerment and the representation of women in political and public life, especially in leadership positions

11. We will continue to support women's equal participation in public and political life and we will provide political and technical support to help women attain their rights and achieve their potential while they rise to become national and global leaders.

Challenging discriminatory laws and practices

12. We will work with governments to change discriminatory legislation and practices, sharing our expertise and best practice. We will support the application of relevant international human rights norms at the national level, making full use of the universal periodic review process to translate action at the Human Rights Council to the local level.

E. Work to promote open societies and challenge threats to civil society

Promoting societies that are inclusive and just

13. We will encourage all governments to create a safe and enabling environment for civil society, which promotes free media and protects journalists from harm. We

will promote the economic, scientific and cultural benefits of open societies and encourage businesses to realize the value of civil society and advocate on its behalf.

14. We will work with individuals and organizations that are developing and expanding their civil society and help them to engage with international organizations and bodies, including the Human Rights Council.

15. We will harness the universal periodic review process to strengthen safeguards for civil society in the states under review.